

## Foreword

# Special Issue. Targeting Teachers in Educational Development: A Discussion of the Framework and Implications of the SDG 4 Target on Teachers

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## Foreword

In 2015 and for the first time in the history of global educational development agendas and goal setting, the international community adopted a target that focuses on teachers. Acknowledging the critical role of teachers for ensuring quality, the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)—Education 2030 Agenda the Incheon Framework for Action calls for countries to "substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 21, target 4.c).

The previous 2000 Education for All (EFA) and 1990 Jomtien goals and frameworks addressed the need to improve and enhance teachers' status, morale, professionalism, and conditions of service (UNESCO, 1990, 2000). Even so, they lacked a measurable and time-bounded target on teachers, let alone one that brought to the forefront the shortages in the supply of qualified teachers.<sup>1</sup>

In the SDG 4—Education 2030, the rationale, description, and overall framework for target 4.c has four characteristics (UNESCO, 2015). First, the target is considered a means of implementing (MoI) the seven SDG 4 or outcome-focused core targets. There are two other MoI targets, and they refer to education facilities and learning environments (4.a) and scholarships to higher education (4.b). Throughout the SDGs, the MoI targets—classified as inputs- or processes-focused targets—are hailed as a key to driving the changes needed for realizing the goals (SDSN, 2015; United Nations, 2015). The MoI targets have equal importance and monitoring priority as the outcome targets, and they are universal, indivisible, and interlinked with the rest of the targets.

Second, the architecture of 4.c has similar elements to the one used for the other targets. It starts with the target formulation and the benchmark year for its achievement. It continues with a justification for considering a target on teachers as a MoI and, finally, it introduces eight indicative strategies.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, 4.c is one of the few targets

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<sup>1</sup> Both the EFA and the Jomtien frameworks contained some broad principles for teacher policies and management, presented in the form of recommended strategies. For example, the Dakar Framework for Action included twelve strategies. One of them invited countries to put in place clearly defined and more imaginative strategies to identify, attract, train, and retain teachers (UNESCO, 2000, strategy 9). Beforehand, the 1990 Jomtien Declaration on EFA had presented one purpose and an expanded vision. Among other ideas, the vision encompassed strengthening partnerships that recognized the role of teachers and urgently improved the terms and conditions of service of teachers and their status (UNESCO, 1990, art. 7). The framework also suggested, at the national level, to prioritize actions that improve the conditions of teaching and learning, initiate/strengthen teacher training, respect teacher unions and teachers' freedoms, and improve teachers' working conditions.

<sup>2</sup> Briefly, the eight indicative strategies for target 4.c are: (1) attract the best and most motivated, and deploy teachers where most needed; (2) review, analyze, and improve the quality and provision of pre- and in-service training; (3) develop qualifications frameworks for teachers, trainers, supervisors, and inspectors; (4) develop and implement teacher management policies, in an inclusive, equitable, and gender-sensitive fashion; (5) provide skills to manage ICTs and

(together with 4.7 on sustainable development and citizenship) that favors, in the wording, a particular approach over many others: international cooperation for teacher training.

Third, apart from the target 4.c, references to teacher issues extend all over the Incheon Framework for Action. For instance, the framework's principles praise the role of teachers in realizing the SDG 4 vision. The overarching SDG 4 calls for relevant teaching and learning methods and well-trained, qualified, adequately remunerated, and motivated teachers. Also, at least two of the five all-embracing strategic approaches laid out in the framework identify various teacher issues as essential.<sup>3</sup> Further, teacher issues are mentioned as indicative strategies for other non-teacher targets (outcomes). For example, target 4.1 (on primary and secondary education) alludes to teacher management systems and targets 4.5 (equity) and 4.7 (sustainable development and citizenship, as mentioned above) to teacher training.

Finally, the target on teachers comes with seven global and thematic indicators and associated monitoring systems to assess countries' progress and ensure accountability (UNESCO-UIS, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; UNESCO, 2015, 2016a). In brief, the seven indicators measure (a) the *availability* of qualified and trained teachers, (b) teacher *motivation*, and (c) the *support* for in-service teacher education. To measure availability, the framework uses the percentage of teachers qualified according to national standards, the proportion of teachers with at least the minimum organized pre- or in-service teacher training, and the ratio of pupils to qualified and trained teachers. Teacher *motivation* employs indicators like teacher's relative salaries and teacher attrition. The percentage who received in-service training is the measures for *support*. There is only one global indicator: the proportion of teachers with the minimum required pre- or in-service training. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted it in July 2017 (UN General Assembly, 2017).<sup>4</sup>

The distinct target on teachers made headlines. Even if applauded, its formulation and overall architecture collected some critical comments, raised in successive SDG 4 monitoring reports. UNESCO (2016a) underscores the existing dissatisfaction with conceiving the target 4.c as a means of implementing the other outcome targets, not

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social networks, and provide training to address pupil's special needs; (6) develop and implement effective feedback systems to support good teaching and professional development; (7) strengthen school leadership; and (8) set up and strengthen mechanisms for institutionalized dialogue with teachers and their organizations (UNESCO, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> The SDG 4–Education 2030 Agenda includes five strategic approaches (UNESCO, 2015). The approach or strategy 2 (emphasize equity, inclusion, and gender equality) highlights the importance of teacher training on inclusive education and gender issues. Strategy 3 (focus on quality and learning) stresses the importance of having enough teachers, teaching practices, teacher empowerment, and equitable and efficient teacher deployment. Furthermore, teacher policies and regulations and supporting government systems are also mentioned within strategy 3.

<sup>4</sup> Earlier debates and proposals included two global indicators that did not make it to the final, agreed list. They were: (1) official development assistance and net private grants as percent of Gross National Income (GNI), and (2) domestic revenues allocated to SD as percent of GNI, by sector (SDSN, 2015)

a target in its own right. Another dissatisfaction is the narrow focus on the supply of qualified teachers and, as a response, the suggestion to monitor other factors such as countries' commitment to teacher motivation and support (UNESCO, 2016a, 2016b). UNESCO (2017) also calls attention to the disconnect between the target formulation and its associated global indicator. Whereas the former refers to qualified teachers, the latter pertains to trained teachers. Lastly, much of the challenges highlighted center on the cross-national comparability of the global indicator, data gathering, and coverage (UNESCO, 2017, 2018).

Aside from the critical comments, there is little discussion on how the SDG 4–Education 2030 agenda addresses, monitors, and measures teacher issues, and on the target's implications for achieving the overarching goal and outcome targets. This special issue contributes to shedding some light on the first-of-its-kind target on teachers in the history of educational development goals. All the seven papers speak about the target 4.c. The issue begins with an introductory note written by **Kazuhiro Yoshida**, from Hiroshima University (Japan). He provides a useful account of the processes and deliberations leading up to Education 2030, the Incheon Framework for Action, and how the target 4.c got formulated. He also compares how the three global development agendas (Jomtien, Dakar, and Incheon) address teacher issues.

The two subsequent papers center on international cooperation and the target 4.c. **Yoko Ishida**, also from Hiroshima University (Japan), pays attention to both the target's conceptual framework of the target and its implications for international cooperation. She discusses how the evaluation criteria for international development assistance evolved. She also elaborates on the principle of *coherence*, a criterion recently added, and why it is essential for the SDGs, the SDG 4, and target 4.c. The overall purpose of her study is to understand how to practice the concept of *coherence* to improve international cooperation, in this case, for teacher professional development. Her research first uses a scale to score the *coherence* of SDGs and targets, centered on target 4.c. Second, she examines how *coherence* has been assessed in the ex-post evaluations of international cooperation projects for teacher professional development and uses the case of Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) evaluations of teacher professional development cooperation projects.

In the third article, **Thomas F. Luschei** and **Amanda Spiegelberg**, from Claremont University (United States), claim that there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of international cooperation on increasing the supply of teachers in low-income countries. Their research uses the case of the United States Peace Corps, one of the oldest examples of international cooperation in education. They review eight studies appraising the perceived impact of Peace Corps projects and volunteers on education quality, teaching quality, and the supply of qualified teachers.

After the discussions about international cooperation and the target 4.c, there is a paper on teacher policies, by **Sarah Stanton**, **Michelle Guzmán**, and **Lucila Malnatti**, from the Inter-American Dialogue (United States), *Inicia Educación* (the Dominican

Republic), and *Fundación Varkey* (Argentina). The authors take a regional stand, Latin America, and examine teacher policies, discuss policy priorities to improve teacher quality, and argue for a regional and collaborative approach to strengthening teacher policies.

The next three papers offer different perspectives to the analysis of teacher training issues in the context of the target 4.c: the barriers to continuous professional development, teacher training for inclusion, and teacher training for global competence. **Victor Volman**, from Universidad de San Andrés, and **Axel Mc Callum**, an independent scholar (both from Argentina), explore how institutional arrangements hinder the continuous professional development of teachers. They use the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 data and focus on Latin American countries, although they also provide some comparisons with other regions/countries. The authors put upfront an argument: the target 4.c will be missed unless the institutional barriers for professional development are addressed, particularly in international cooperation for teacher training.

The sixth paper focuses on teacher training for inclusion, and it is written by **Katarzyna Kubacka** and **Anna Cristina D'Addio**, respectively, from the National Foundation for Educational Research (United Kingdom) and UNESCO (France). They summarize the state of knowledge on teacher education for inclusion and diversity and provide country examples of teacher training on disabilities, the skills and topics favored, and the approaches for inclusive teaching. They also describe the challenges in the design and adaptation of teacher education for inclusion and conclude with some recommendations.

The last paper of this JICE's special issue is on teacher training for global competence. Addressing the connection between the targets 4.c and 4.7, **Susan Wiksten**, from the University of California Los Angeles (United States), considers the trends imposed upon global teacher education and discusses the challenges and possibilities of teacher education for global citizenship education. She delineates some principles for any teacher education curriculum for global citizenship.

Five years have passed since the 2015 Incheon declaration, and we might already have some basis for understanding the implications of having a target on teachers. Aside from recent developments on the monitoring efforts around target 4.c, there is a need for knowledge generation that reflects on the same framework structuring the target 4.c and the implications of having such a target for educational development. For example, we need more work reflecting on and even depicting the theory of change, the key theoretical elements, and assumptions articulated in the architecture of target 4.c, including the proposed causal links among the teacher themes and strategies invoked in the Education 2030 agenda.

There is also an opportunity for further studying the implications of the SDG 4 target 4.c on international cooperation for teacher training or other teacher-related approaches, for example, changes in the donor or non-governmental organizations' strategies. Studies could highlight the consequences or impact of international cooperation for teacher

training or other strategies on the supply of qualified teachers, and even the extent to which the target 4.c is conducive to passing, expediting, or improving teacher policies, regulations, and interventions at the national or subnational levels.

Overall, I believe that the papers in the special issue contribute to understanding the framework and implications of the SDG 4 target on teachers.

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